

5 Putting on a *Pano* and Dancing Like Our Grandparents: Nation and Dress in Late Colonial Luanda

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They liked Brazilian music, they danced very well and they liked American cinema. I remember that the big stars at the time were Don Ameche and others, obviously *cowboy* films. . . . This imaginary of American cinema was reflected in the way they behaved, in their suits, in the way they wore their mustaches—in the design of their mustaches you would see the presence of the American actor, the white actor. And there was certainly the influence of the black actors too, but this was mostly reflected in the way they dressed.

—Michel Laban, *Mário Pinto de Andrade, Uma entrevista*¹

Referring to the 1940s and '50s at the Liga Nacional Africana (National African League) in Luanda, Pinto de Andrade reminisces about his "*mais velhos*"² as they performed American-inspired dances and artistic numbers in the halls of an association dedicated to the defense of the rights of Africans. Although the Liga was an elite institution it nonetheless preoccupied itself with the conditions of its down-trodden black brethren just as it sought to reclaim "Africa" from colonial cultural ignominy. Liga members would present a play representing life in the *musseques* (Luanda's urban shantytowns which housed the majority of urban African residents), using local instruments, ways of speaking, and dress as readily as a performance of American-style tap dancing or a Carmen Miranda number.³ An insistence on this duality of Western and African practices would become the unself-conscious hallmark of this young group. The Liga's position as a loyalist association was the source of intergenerational political conflict as some of this younger generation began to argue for an uncompromising nationalist politics. Like Malcolm X as described in Robin D. G. Kelley's *Race Rebels*, these young men did not associate their dress with political expression. And yet, as Kelley argues, the dance, dress, and culture that Malcolm X later dismissed as the accouterments of a self-hating black man were "not a detour on the road to political consciousness but rather an essential element of his radicalization."⁴

In the Angolan instance, radicalization was bound up with a larger set of cos-

mopolitan cultural practices, of which dress was one. Young Angolans reached beyond the cultural vistas of Angola and the horizons of the Portuguese colonial imaginary to create local fashions and other cultural practices that asserted both their difference and their participation in the "global ecumene."⁵ What developed was a cosmopolitan youth culture that recognized itself in the cut of a jacket, the length of a skirt, or the tilt of the hat from elsewhere just as it donned those symbols as intimate expressions of *angolanidade* (Angolan-ness). As the colonial state became more repressive in response to nationalist political activities in Angola, such self-styling grew in its significance, becoming both more widespread (within the capital and throughout the territory) and more meaningful. The possibilities for dress and their consequent meanings varied by gender, and this could not help but have implications for the nation being forged in the seemingly apolitical practices of dress and entertainment.

Cosmopolitanism and the Nation

Mobutu Sese Seko's mandated *authenticité* in independent Zaire is perhaps the most well-known example of the association between dress and politics, dress and nation in Africa. Here the independent state promoted African apparel as a form of roots recovery to advance the nation-building project. African cultural forms were to remedy the European-centered identity that could be discerned in the tendency of at least some urban residents to dress in European styles and to speak French. But as Thomas Turino's recent work demonstrates, borrowed cultural markers and materials can be more than the mere trappings or imitations of another culture. Turino describes this phenomenon as cosmopolitanism and defines as cosmopolitan "objects, ideas, and cultural positions that are widely diffused throughout the world and yet are specific only to certain portions of the populations within given countries. . . . [Cosmopolitanism] has to be realized in specific locations and in the lives of actual people." It is both local and non-local while not necessarily being nationally evident, as it is often tied to specific classes or social groups. Turino argues that nationalism is itself an example of a cosmopolitan doctrine that both arises from cosmopolitan practices and aims to spread them throughout a national territory. What is crucial, Turino claims, is that the forms become internalized by and integral to the people in the group: "*this is part of who they are.*"⁶ An African in European clothes is no less authentically African than an African in African clothes. As the quotation that opens this chapter shows, dress can be a way of saying "this is who I am" within parameters that are both local and non-local. In thinking about cosmopolitan cultural practices around music in the Congo, Bob White avers that "unlike 'globalization' or 'modernity,' cosmopolitanism is not something that happens to people, it is something that people do."⁷ White underscores Turino's sense that the use of European goods and forms is not imitation or imposition, and he shifts the emphasis from a potentially static rendering of identity to the activity of self-styling. Hence there is room for innovation and creativity, for subversion and play, for combinations that otherwise might be taken as contradictions.

In Angola, particularly in Luanda but in other urban centers as well, dress became one of the ways in which Africans created and expressed their angolanidade—a unique Angolan way of being in the world.⁸ Under a colonial regime that defined Angola as part of the Portuguese nation, angolanidade took on nationalist overtones. However, the explicitly nationalist uses of dress that Mobutu's *authenticité* represents, and of music and the discourses around it that Turino's work analyzes, are not the most useful model here. In late colonial Angola, the relationship between music and dress was more tenuous. In order to untangle this relationship we need to distinguish nationalism (and the adjective "nationalist") as a political project relating to territorial sovereignty and state control from nation as a politico-cultural imaginary. Nationalism always requires an articulation of nation but nation does not require the same of nationalism. As Eric Hobsbawm points out, "nations do not make states and nationalisms but the other way round."⁹ Yet we should not take this to mean that nation is merely a reflex, or automatic, production of nationalism. In the case of dress in Angola, by taking nation on its own terms we can see the ways in which this cultural practice helped forge the nation and prepare people for the politics of nationalism. Likewise, by attending more closely to cultural practices, we can begin to see how the nation is fragmented¹⁰ along the lines of gender, something that would not be as accessible if we thought only in terms of nationalism, political parties, and the state.

The distinction between nation and nationalism is crucial when thinking about Angola because the high level of political repression after 1959 meant that nationalist politics were largely the provenance of exiles and a small number of clandestine activists. In part composed of a younger generation who parted ways with the reformist politics of the Liga, small underground groups of activists (three to five people) met and engaged in pamphleting and other forms of political provocation aimed at educating their neighbors in the musseques about the necessity of independence. Some of these activists were connected to the Portuguese Communist Party and small local parties that were calling for Angolan independence.¹¹ In 1959 the colonial government arrested, tried, and jailed some fifty Angolans whom it accused of "activities against the external security of the state"¹² in what is known as the Processo de 50 (Case of 50).¹³ Most were civil servants, nurses, workers, and students from the most educated strata of Africans, although many of them lived or spent their free time in the musseques where the majority of Africans resident in Luanda lived. In February 1961 a group of individuals attacked the Luanda prisons (where some of these political prisoners were held), a police barrack, and the radio station.¹⁴ In the same year, this small urban uprising was preceded by a protest turned uprising against the exploitation of cotton production in Kassanje (northeast of Luanda in the Malanje province), and then followed by a revolt in March in the northern Kongo coffee-producing areas. The colonial government was now on the defensive. It responded violently to these uprisings¹⁵ and then cracked down on any sign of political activity, especially in urban areas. Distant as this may seem from questions of sartorial savvy, René Pélissier in discussing this period remarked that "urban Africans tried to pass unnoticed by avoiding in their appearance and attitudes anything (the wearing of clothes too European in style, for example)

which might give rise to the suspicion that they would like to oust the whites."¹⁶ The Portuguese had concluded that those proposing independence and fomenting revolt were, for the most part, well-educated urban dwellers keen on the European fashion that helped them signal their elite status and that differentiated them from the masses. For a moment, following Pélissier, the colonialists understood that European dress did not necessarily mean that the so-called *assimilados* (assimilated) identified with them, unless of course it meant that they had identified too much, had become cheeky and too big for their britches, and deemed themselves capable of self-rule.

After the violent response to the events of 1961 the colonial government made some changes in policy. These changes were implemented as a last-ditch attempt to maintain colonial domination by making life more tolerable for Africans whose living and working conditions might foster revolt. They included the abolition of the *indigenato* system that had divided the African population in two (*assimilados*—assimilated—and *indígenas*—indigenous) and accorded Portuguese citizenship only to the few who managed to achieve the status of *assimilado*; the implementation of a new rural labor code freeing rural workers from coerced contract labor; the opening of more schools; encouragement of foreign investment, which created more jobs; and the largely overlooked promotion of local culture and recreation (clubs, talent shows, and soccer clubs). The events of 1961 also marked the beginning of the guerrilla struggle as the nationalist movements moved permanently into exile, exchanging their street togs for fatigues. The battle continued on until independence in 1975, and in those years life in the musseques took on a particular cast. While the guerrillas and politicians struggled to assert political sovereignty and control, urban Angolans sang, danced, and dressed their nation in what appeared to the Portuguese as so much bread and circuses. Urban fashions and dress practices, closely tied in with the burgeoning youth scene of music and parties, bespoke a nation whose cultural sovereignty was secured in the swagger of a step, the sweep of a pant leg, or the swell of a fabric wrapped around one's head.

Looking beyond the Metropole: Dress in the 1940s and 1950s

Under the *indigenato* system, which was in place until September 1961, Africans were divided into two groups: *assimilados* and *indígenas*. The former, according to the 1940 and 1950 censuses, accounted for less than 1 percent of the population, giving the lie to Portuguese claims of racial equality and harmony.¹⁷ Theoretically, anyone could become an *assimilado* and have access to a Portuguese identity card (required to enter the school system or the civil service and exempting one from contract, i.e., forced, labor). But the reality was much different. Decisions about who was an *assimilado* could be quite random and depended upon the whims of Portuguese shop owners in the musseques and *chefes de posto* (local administrators) outside the city who supported, or did not support, the citizenship applications of Africans in their area. To be categorized as an *assimilado* one had "to be eighteen years old, demonstrate the ability to read, write and speak Portuguese fluently, earn wages from a trade, eat, dress, and worship as the Portuguese,

maintain a standard of living and customs similar to the European way of life, and have no record with the police."¹⁸ But so arbitrary was the system that people living in the same household could have different statuses.¹⁹ As in many other colonial situations, European dress was one of the markers of civilization. However, as Mário Pinto de Andrade recalled, many male *assimilado* youth in the 1940s and 1950s looked to Brazil and to American film actors as the benchmark of fashion. If Portuguese clothing was meant to mark one as captured, in a sense, by the colonial system, these young men mocked the Portuguese by setting their sartorial sights beyond the metropole.²⁰

Promoting Portuguese dress as a standard of civilization was only part of the colonial policy related to clothing. African dress was denigrated, considered quaint enough for folkloric performances and tourist snapshots but not suitable for urban wear.²¹ Albina Assis remembers that

Those who wore *panos* [pieces of fabric] every day could not enter into buses—it was prohibited. Later, after the fourth of February [1961] . . . is when they created, and you can write this down, the *munhungo*^[22] bus that was to serve poor people, low-income people, more or less *pé descalço* [without shoes]—and it was only in these buses that the women in *panos* were allowed to ride. . . . It was for this reason that a large part of the people took the route of using [European] dresses because, in general, the dress, overall here, even at the level of the city of Luanda, was *panos*. . . . All of my aunts wore *panos*, even those who were the wives of Portuguese men—two of them, even today, have never stopped using *panos*.²³

As Assis notes, *panos* were a common form of urban female attire as well as the traditional attire of fishermen from the island of Luanda. Women from the urban elite were referred to as *bessanganas* and their use of *panos* was quite distinct, involving a series of undergarments, four layers of *panos* over a long-sleeved blouse, and a smaller *pano* wrapped around the head.²⁴ By the early 1970s it was mostly older women who maintained this form of dress. Younger women routinely donned European-style dresses, though often with a *pano* wrapped around the outside and rolled at the waist, and a headscarf. Writing in the early 1970s on the *musseques*, Ramiro Ladeiro Monteiro noted that “this piece of clothing defines a woman’s social status and its absence, in the midst of certain social strata, is noticed. That is why the washerwoman we see in her boss’s house dressed in European style, upon returning to the *musseques*, concerns herself with putting a *pano* around her waist.”²⁵ This was, perhaps, less a question of peer pressure than of dignity and adaptation of practices, as Assis’s final remark about her aunts suggests. At the same time it was not uncommon to see younger women in miniskirts, again with scarves on their heads, and *panos* wrapped around their waists to facilitate carrying babies on their backs.²⁶ Women’s quotidian acts of self-styling gave local forms of dress a new meaning. Young women who used *panos* with miniskirts or European dress nodded to the *bessanganas*’ style as uniquely Angolan while also adapting it. By neither dismissing it as archaic nor reproducing it layer by layer, these young women demonstrated a new posture of Angolan womanhood that was both local and worldly.



Figure 5.1. The singer Belita Palma dressed as a *bessangana*. No date. Courtesy of ENDIPU (National Company of Disks and Publications).

If young women paraded the fashionable miniskirt, it was still the complex dress of the *bessanganas* which held sway in the dance called *rebita*. As Jacques dos Santos asserts more generally about Luanda, "fashion and dance always had affinities."²⁷ *Rebita* was a dance popular among Luanda's Africans in the 1930s (although it dates as far back as the mid-eighteenth century)—when, dos Santos argues, it was still respectable to be a laborer—and these workers formed *rebita* groups in the *musseques* and other neighborhoods.²⁸ It is nonetheless associated with an older urban elite. *Rebita* is a dance done in a large circle formed by couples. It includes elements both European (including some instructions called out in French by the emcee)²⁹ and African (women's dress and particular dance steps like the *umbigada* or stomach thrust). The dress code was rigorous, with men clad in European suits and ties and women dressed à la *bessangana*.³⁰ The emcee generally checked to make sure that the dancers were properly attired. Thus, as early as the 1930s, dress

was already used by the elite to distinguish themselves and to express a unique style that showcased African dress as worthy of partnership with European dress. For as much as some social scientists wanted to claim the presence of European dress as a sign of progressive acculturation,³¹ rebita bespoke a sensibility much more cosmopolitan than metropolitan. It did not elevate Portuguese culture or dress over African but wedded European cultural practices of salon dancing, dress, and language with African instruments, clothing, and social codes to create a novel local practice.

For those women, like Assis's aunts (one of whom was married to a Portuguese man and lived in the metropole), who maintained the dress of *bessanganas* outside of the context of rebita, this form of dress was a way of maintaining cultural practices and pride in the face of colonial discrimination. It would be difficult to call this dress nationalist resistance, but it points to the variety of ways in which gendered practices of dress contributed to the construction of a sense of nation. By continuing to dress in *panos* despite the lack of access to public transport and public buildings that doing so entailed, these women insisted that urban space was African and Angolan. Those women who continued to use *panos* in conjunction with European dress also saw no contradiction in being both urban and Angolan; this was who they were and it was legible in the way they dressed.

The youth of the 1950s self-consciously used such forms as templates for their political involvement. For the most part, the young men and women who were involved in politico-cultural activities in the late 1950s and early 1960s dressed in European style. As students in the city's schools and holders of identity cards, they had little choice. Young women who attended schools would not have worn *panos*, not even just as headwraps, except perhaps on the weekend. The musician and historian Carlos Lamartine noted that "as a rule, people had to dress in the Western style—this was even a way of depersonalizing and incorporating the Angolans. This not just from the point of view of clothes but almost everything that people did. When we went to school, upon entering the school we had to present ourselves as European individuals."³² But as many of this generation noted, their mothers, aunts, or grandmothers still maintained the typical Luandan manner of wearing *panos*. These young students were, as well, quite conscious of the various kinds of discrimination practiced against Africans under the Portuguese colonial system. Many of their parents were involved in the Liga and they had certainly heard about the evils of contract labor. They heard the Portuguese disparage Kimbundu by calling it the "language of dogs," and their parents' attempts at social advancement within the colonial system led to their own inability to speak the language. These attempts gave them access to formal education, but for this they paid the price of cultural alienation.

They began to question why their education had everything to do with Portugal and nothing to do with Angola. In small politico-cultural groups formed in the *musseques*, and which sometimes performed at the Liga, they sought to revalorize and rediscover local cultural practices. A burgeoning literary movement, sprouting in part from the Liga and Anangola (Association of Angolan Natives), had already, in its own way, created cosmopolitan practices of writing (essays, poems, and

*estórias*³³—short tales based on the Kimbundu traditions of *misoso*) that made local culture and day-to-day experiences available to Angolans and the world in the form universally recognized as “literature.” Politico-cultural groups like Bota Fogo, the girls’ group Santa Cecília, and the theater group Ngongo recited this poetry and presented the stories and dramatized scenes of daily life in the musseques as theatrical pieces, thereby sowing the seeds of cultural renovation beyond a limited literate and literary public. Many of these young folks were quite politicized in the sense that they were already thinking about and discussing Angolan independence. They saw their cultural work as a way of educating the masses of the musseques by representing back to them the contradictions and tensions of quotidian experiences of colonial oppression. Central to their performances—whether theatrical or musical or literary—was the use of local forms of dress.

These performances did not so much meld styles as present what was denigrated in the Portuguese colonial order as representative of something meaningful and something uniquely “ours.” In terms of clothing, this was generally women’s dress. But this did not mean that they advocated a return to dressing in panos or did so themselves. Albina Assis put it most succinctly: “we were students and we went and did African dance, dancing like our grandparents or ancestors, exactly in order to show that the dance of Africans—putting on a pano and dancing—did not take away from us our cultural education or the [academic] education that we had . . . and we saw that this caused a shock with the system.”³⁴ The point was not to suggest that panos represented an authentic or real Angola but, instead, to emphasize the duality of being both educated and African without contradiction. This challenged the colonial system with the proposition that one could be Angolan and not Portuguese, even when dressed in European styles. What made the use of local styles of dress cosmopolitan, in this instance, was the contexts in which they were presented—i.e., in theatrical performances, in matinees for children, in poetry recitations and discussions of local literature, and as a self-conscious commentary. Likewise, the ideas with which many of these young folks approached these activities reflected a sensibility that refused the metropole and its decrees, laws, and prohibitions while still embracing other more cosmopolitan practices of literary production, dress, and education.

“He Had a Talent for Dressing!”: Dress after 1961

The arrest, detention, trial, and then imprisonment of nationalists beginning in 1959 meant that the Portuguese state’s secret police, the PIDE, began to pay closer attention to political activity in the musseques and that the Liga was itself subject to greater censure. The three uprisings in 1961, which received international attention,³⁵ compounded the political troubles of the Portuguese administration in the colony (actually called an “overseas territory,” an extension of the Portuguese nation much as Algeria was in the French imaginary). The PIDE throttled local political activity and the government deployed counterinsurgency troops in tactics that meant that the war had begun in earnest.

If political repression created greater secrecy, self-censorship, and even the

avoidance of political questions, a sort of shrinking away from the political, some of the new colonial policies were used by urban Africans to make culture flourish. The encouragement of foreign investment meant more jobs were available locally, access to credit allowed many urban Africans to build and purchase their own homes, the opening of schools made education more widely available (though still quite limited), and the promotion of local culture meant to distract the Angolan urban masses actually consolidated a sense of angolanidade. It is important to note, however, that the colonial government did not actually spearhead cultural developments; it merely followed African initiative. For example, clubs and bands existed in the early 1960s but the creation of the Angolan Center for Tourism and Information (CITA) by the colonial government in the mid-1960s allowed activities to be coordinated and promoted on a broader scale. This new system had its limitations—CITA also meant oversight and control, and the censorship board tried to see to it that potentially inflammatory lyrics did not make it to the stage. In this context, politics was a dangerous and necessarily secretive business and those who had not been arrested in the sweeps of 1959 and 1961 either left to fight with the guerrillas or engaged in extremely low-level clandestine activities. Even those who merely followed political developments via the MPLA's radio broadcast *Angola combatente* listened alone or with one or two friends, often under beds or in cars parked in empty soccer fields, so terrified were they of being labeled an enemy or a terrorist and jailed.³⁶

Entertainment, on the other hand, even though somewhat constrained, was encouraged. Yet the effects of this were not what the colonial government expected. Entertainment, specifically music, brought people together in public, largely all-African spaces (i.e., owned by Africans, located in the musseques, and attended overwhelmingly by Africans). These clubs would have attracted significantly larger numbers of youth than had the politico-cultural groups of the 1950s. Not only had the urban population nearly doubled between 1950 and 1960 and more than doubled between 1960 and 1970,³⁷ but this new form of entertainment took parties and dancing out of the homes and backyards of neighbors and friends to a larger, more public platform where one could more easily escape the watchful eyes of parents and family. The gatherings had a broader appeal, and this in turn increased the size of the venues. This had different implications for young men and young women, as the clubs were often deemed potentially liberating by young women and potentially dangerous by young women's parents. Clubs like the famous Clube Maxinde were built and rebuilt to be able to hold up to several hundred people, and stationed bouncers at the door to enforce dress codes, collect tickets, and control the entry of a public whose basic social background was the musseque but whose names and faces were not necessarily known.³⁸ Bota Fogo was much smaller in size, and it was easy to see and meet everyone who was attending an event. The clubs, with their larger size and degree of anonymity, lent a sense of participating in a shared cultural practice without necessarily knowing everyone else who was there.³⁹

Of course, the PIDE were not so naive as to leave the clubs and young *farristas* (partiers) to their own devices, but they tended to take a literalist approach to the

music and the scene, worrying about musical lyrics and political conversations. By government order, club statutes prohibited membership by anyone who had been arrested for political activities, though they could still attend events.⁴⁰ That young Africans gathered meant that the PIDE knew where to find them, dancing and partying until the wee hours instead of plotting against the government. But this line of thinking missed what was at stake. People were gathering to hear a new form of music that was uniquely Angolan while being in many ways similar to the foreign (European, Brazilian, Cuban, Congolese) music with which most urban Africans were familiar: the songs, like foreign ones, were a few minutes long; they were meant to be danced to; and they were performed by nattily clad band members playing electric guitars. Coming together to hear this music created a sense of being a part of something located both in and far beyond the musseques. The fact that clubs were owned by individual Africans or groups of Africans and that one spent one's hard-earned salary to attend dances and shows by local performers could not but forge a feeling of economic and cultural self-sufficiency.

In the interviews I conducted in late 2001 and early 2002, I was constantly struck by the aura of nostalgia associated with this period. At first I found it deeply troubling that the late colonial period would be remembered in such romantic terms and set up so favorably against the present. But I soon came to realize that what had been lost was this sense of being in control of one's life and being able to take care of oneself, and the association of that feeling with the idea of being Angolan. Consumer practices that involved everything from buying new clothes to paying the entrance fee at a club or buying records of the new style of Angolan music played there generated an experience of personal and community independence that prepared urban Angolans for, or in Kelley's terms radicalized them for, nationalist politics. They had created and secured the nation in the quotidian cultural practices of music, dance, and dress.

More than a few times, reveries about the good old days of music included the comment "and people used to dress well!"⁴¹ A sense of self-respect was one of the marks of a growing dignity in the nation. People took the time and care to dress well and they spent the fruits of their toil on doing so. They were not extravagant and, for the most part, people took care to spend their money intelligently. Hence it was common, among both the working classes and the elites of the musseques, to buy cloth at one of the large retailers in the musseques⁴² and then take it to a seamstress or tailor to have clothing made. Musseque dwellers may have been dependent on Portuguese retailers, but when they could they took their business to their neighbors and avoided buying ready-made clothing in the shops of the city center.⁴³ This was both more economical and a way of recognizing the talents and skills within their own community. In fact, some people much preferred having clothes custom-made to buying premade clothes, no matter what their quality, since they would not be perfectly fitted to their wearer. Chico Coio explains,

[People] dressed well in those days and things were cheap. There was Gajageira, the colonialists were here. . . . in those days, any old person could dress well, the seamstresses made money, but today no, because of the *fardos* [markets of secondhand

imported clothing]. The tailors made money because no one bought already-made pants—I would buy fabric and have them made, they would take my measurements and make me a pair of pants. . . . Shirts were not purchased already made, you would go to a seamstress or tailor, they would take your measurements. . . . everyone had a seamstress, everyone had their tailor and you would go to your tailor and say, “ay-pa [a common exclamation], I am going to a party!” . . . People worked hard and that bit that they earned was enough to pay the rent and feed and sustain the family. . . . It was because of this that people dressed well and then would go to those parties where you would party, dance, and hear the music of your favorite band.⁴⁴

Dressing well was associated with pride in working hard and providing for oneself and one's family and with entertainment. Those young men and a few women (including some musical artists) who made enough money to shop in the stores of the city center could even buy on credit.⁴⁵

The favored style of dress, while considered Western or European, was not necessarily Portuguese. Many people remembered looking through catalogues and magazines at the tailor's shop or at stores and mentioned the influence of magazines and films on local fashion.⁴⁶ They mentioned Italian, Brazilian, French, and American styles most frequently. People began to invent their own manner of dress in a way that inserted them in this line-up of styles defined by nation. By the late 1960s, the rock 'n' roll revolution of Britain and the United States had also touched Angola. Local rock bands (which played what was called “yeah-yeah” music) existed, but far more popular were bands that played Angolan *semba* and Congolese and Cuban-style rumba. Semba is an Angolan urban popular form of music that combines both European and African styles; European instruments are played in local styles, songs are dance-length but their lyrics are in Kimbundu, and ballads are set in the quotidian context of the musseques. Local musicians became famous and, as in many places, trendsetters. Musicians paid particular attention to how they dressed. African-style dress was largely reserved for performances for tourists (and, after independence, for shows outside the country which required musicians to represent the nation),⁴⁷ while European styles were followed and reinvented locally. The fashions associated with rock 'n' roll in the U.S. and Europe were part of this local scene. The composer Luís Martins, or “Xabanu,” linked fashion to music in Angola in a way that once again looked past Portugal:

our evolution began, practically, when Roberto Carlos expanded in Brazil as a musician. So we then saw the French style, the American and the Brazilian. . . . We didn't pay much attention to the Portuguese style, and especially not since some of the Portuguese would say to us, “look, dressing like that,” excuse the expression, “is risqué.” Sometimes the whites would call us names or make fun of us. [Imitating what they would say:] “This style of dress is a ridiculous way of dressing.” Because they didn't like it. They liked to wear their pants like this, here at the belly button, and we wore them here [points to his hips].⁴⁸

Record album covers and photographs from the period show bell bottoms, ample shirt collars, big sunglasses, wide belts, and big hair.⁴⁹ Like Pinto de Andrade's “*mais velhos*” in the '40s, the urban Angolan youth of the late '60s and early '70s



Figure 5.2. The musician Lakes Alberto. No date. Courtesy of ENDIPU (National Company of Disks and Publications).

also took its cue from African-American style, in this case returning “Afros” to Africa.

Male performers often garnered fame for their style of dress. The composer Xabanu was a close friend of the singer Urbano de Castro, who was one of the musicians known for his distinctive style of dress. In describing de Castro’s flair Xabanu exclaimed, “He had a talent for dressing!”⁵⁰ Urbano de Castro was quite keen on wearing suits and shirts, crafted by his own tailor and adorned with big medallions. He was one of the most popular figures in the musseques.⁵¹ His talent for dressing was matched by his talent for singing the realities of urban African life. According to another musician, Carlos Lamartine, de Castro had a song about



Figure 5.3. The musician Santocas. No date. Courtesy of ENDIPU (National Company of Disks and Publications).

mabela zole, a sturdy fabric the Portuguese marketed particularly to Africans in order “to differentiate them from the European women.” Class and race combined to denigrate the material in the minds and imaginaries of those who had more means. Among the elite it was seen as the cloth of the poor and the rural. But de Castro’s song lauded the material and, Lamartine notes, “since he praised it in one of his songs, naturally people became more conscious and today they wear it.”⁵² This fabric, like the practice of wearing panos, was reclaimed and reinterpreted outside the confines of metropolitan designs.

The club scene and the music scene were defined primarily by male prerogative. Historically, bands emerged in the musseques in association with the musical components of *carnaval* groups called *turmas*.⁵³ Although carnival groups were composed of both men and women, and indeed women were quite central figures, the *turmas* were predominantly male. To a certain degree, the emergence of the music

Reviver

Urbano de Castro

Volume 5



APRESENTA COLEÇÃO : RITMOS ANGOLANOS

Figure 5.4. The musician Urbano de Castro. From the cover of the CD *Reviver Urbano de Castro* (Produções Teta Lando, Luanda, 1998). Reprinted with the kind permission of Produções Teta Lando.

and club scene in the 1960s and '70s marginalized women as cultural producers, though their presence in the clubs and in musical lyrics attests to their continuing importance. Early bands which were not direct emanations of *turmas* were formed by groups of young men who knew each other from the neighborhood or school, and playing in a band was often and increasingly associated with winning female attention as the club scene grew. While female vocalists did exist, they were fewer in number and faced the prejudices of a society that associated female performance at clubs with prostitution. Hence, while male performers and male and female audience members donned the latest styles, female performers more commonly performed in *panos* or conservative female dress and eschewed social involvement in the club scene. By embracing local styles of dress, female performers guarded their reputations and made themselves representatives of the nation that did not trouble

social norms.⁵⁴ Male musicians, on the other hand, managed to elevate the status of musicians through the music's tremendous popularity and its association with the nation without having to strike more conservative social postures.⁵⁵ Thus the gendered meanings of nation and adornment played out somewhat differently for men and for women at the level of performance in clubs.

Dress in late colonial Luanda was a cosmopolitan practice in which people engaged to say something about who they were both as individuals and as a group. What seemed either innocuous or even a positive sign of acculturation to the colonial administration was actually radicalizing for Africans. The male youth generation of the 1940s to which Pinto de Andrade refers used dress to differentiate themselves from their elders, the colonial rulers, and the majority of the population.⁵⁶ Their style of dress was part of a larger set of practices and beliefs oriented by international trends but also oriented to and by their life in Luanda. They learned French, American, and Brazilian style from the films and popular culture of those countries. They dressed and coifed themselves in the image of film heroes both white and African-American in order to more clearly express who they were and how they were Angolan. By the 1950s those youth involved in the politico-cultural groups of the period dramatized the colonial politics of dress and refused the Manichean colonial vision meant to divide *assimilados* and *indígenas*. They embraced their education, their European-style dress, and their grandparents' dances and *panos* in the same gesture.

By the early 1960s politico-cultural groups were banned, European dress was the rule, and a cultural project intended to distract Africans from the war between the nationalist guerrillas and the colonial forces was in full swing. The cultural politics of dress were neither as stark as they had been just a decade earlier nor taken up as explicitly. With an influx of rural and young immigrants the *bessanganas* were a minority, and young women adapted *panos* for use with European-style dress that proclaimed an urban Angolan-ness. African dress was sometimes worn by musicians, and more frequently by female than male artists, but generally when they were performing in Portuguese clubs or for foreign dignitaries. However, to view this as "Europeanization" or a success for Portuguese rule would be a mistake. In the clubs and parties of the *musseques* international styles, particularly those of Brazil, France, and the U.S., were adopted and adapted. They were part and parcel of a musical culture that forged a unique style that was based both in the quotidian realities of the *musseques* and in the international flows of popular culture (film, music, dance, and dress). This assertion of *angolanidade* that was at once urban, African, cosmopolitan, and gendered inserted Angola alongside other clearly definable nations as one among equals in cultural terms. Despite the fact that the media was heavily censored and news about the nationalist struggle difficult to come by, these Angolans were engaged in a politics of the quotidian that radicalized them for and allowed them to find a place for themselves in the nationalist politics that were to come. Their self-styling and cultural, and sometimes economic, self-sufficiency gave them a lived experience of independence which made political sovereignty both imaginable and desirable. That this experience was gendered meant

not that the nation was not viable but that it did not mean the same thing for everyone.⁵⁷ Nationalist leaders who struggled from exile did not understand the implications of quotidian cultural practices in the musseques and were dismissive of the activities of those who had not left to take up armed struggle (who were in fact the overwhelming majority), while at the same time MPLA leaders, at least, depended on many of the young folks from this milieu, including Urbano de Castro and other musicians, to convince the musseques' population to support their party.⁵⁸ What both the MPLA (as well as the FNLA and UNITA)⁵⁹ and the earlier colonial government failed to recognize was that cultural practices were not just a distraction for the masses or an alternative organ of communication, but something which reordered and rearranged relations between those participating and the world around them.

Notes

1. Michel Laban, *Mário Pinto de Andrade: Uma entrevista* (Lisbon: Edições João Sá da Costa, 1997), 30–31. Translations from Portuguese are my own.
2. *Mais velhos* means elders, but not in the sense of village elders so much as anyone older than you who therefore deserves your respect. Pinto de Andrade was referring to the young men of his brother's generation, who were about ten years older than he was and whom he looked up to.
3. Laban, *Mário Pinto de Andrade*, 43.
4. Robin D. G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, 1996), 163.
5. Ulf Hannerz, "Sophiatown: The View from Afar," in *Readings in African Popular Culture*, ed. Karin Barber (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 164. Hannerz sets up an opposition between a view of the world as a global mosaic (with distinct cultures, peoples, and territories: a view characteristic of the nation-state) and the global ecumene (seeing culture as collectively held meanings that are a part of social relationships that don't necessarily fit the boundaries of the nation-state).
6. Thomas Turino, *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 7, 10–11, 9.
7. Bob W. White, "Congolese Rumba and Other Cosmopolitanisms," *Cahiers d'étude africaines*, no. 168 (2002), special issue on world music, 681.
8. The term *angolanidade* emerges from a literary movement that arose in the 1950s and 1960s, primarily in Luanda. It was coined by the literary critic Alfredo Margarido in 1962 to describe what was distinct about this generation of writers and the nascent project they were engaged in. I use it here to mean "the quality of being Angolan" but remain conscious of the context (urban, cosmopolitan) in which the term was originally used. I would not, for example, suggest that the term is apt for describing anyone with Angolan nationality.
9. Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 10.
10. I take this idea of fragmentation from Partha Chatterjee's *The Nation and Its*

Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

11. Among the groups formed between about 1953 and 1960 were the Angolan Communist Party (PCA), the Party of United Struggle for Africans in Angola (PLUA), the Union of Angolan Populations (UPA), which later became the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), and the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). The official date of the MPLA's founding is 1956 but this has been contested recently by a number of scholars, including Marcelo Bittencourt, *Dos jornais às armas: Trajetórias da contestação angolana* (Lisbon: Vega, 1999); Laban, *Mário Pinto de Andrade*; Carlos Pacheco, *Repensar Angola* (Lisbon: Vega, 2000); and Jean-Michel Tali, *Dissidências e poder de estado: O MPLA perante si próprio (1962–1977)*, 2 vols. (Luanda: Editorial Nzila, 2001).
12. "Pronunciados por actividades contra a segurança do Estado mais trinta e dois indivíduos na Comarca de Luanda," *Jornal ABC: Diário de Luanda*, December 18, 1959.
13. One of the people jailed, Liceu Vieira Dias, was among the group that Mário Pinto de Andrade was referring to in the quotation at the opening of this chapter. He was a public functionary (at the national bank) who was involved in clandestine political activities and had also started the band Ngola Ritmos, which was one of the first bands to self-consciously play popular Angolan tunes on local instruments. They transformed popular songs into a more danceable form, extending lyrics and enhancing the instrumentation so that they became less repetitive.
14. Responsibility for this attack was almost immediately claimed by the MPLA, although recent historical work has debunked this connection and pointed rather to Cônego Manuel das Neves, an Angolan Catholic priest who also served on the legislative council (an advisory council to the governor). See Bittencourt, *Dos jornais às armas*, 131.
15. Napalm bombings in Kassanje, murderous white militias in the musseques, and decapitation in the north were among the tactics used by the colonial government in repressing and redressing these revolts. See Douglas Wheeler and René Pélissier, *Angola* (New York: Praeger, 1971), 173–92.
16. *Ibid.*, 186.
17. Gerald Bender, *Angola under the Portuguese: The Myth and the Reality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 151.
18. *Ibid.*, 150. Ironically, as Bender points out, many Portuguese immigrants could not meet these criteria.
19. Alberto Jaime, interview by author, December 4, 2001. (All interviews were conducted in Luanda, Angola.) Jaime told me that while a local military officer who was a friend of his mother's helped him to get an identity card (i.e., qualify as an assimilado), his brothers and sisters, with whom he was living, did not receive them until the changes implemented in late 1961 abolished the indigenato code and generalized Portuguese citizenship.
20. Bob White deftly discusses this phenomenon in relation to the popularity and influence of Afro-Cuban music in the Belgian Congo. See White, "Congolese Rumba and Other Cosmopolitanisms."
21. See, for example, "Folclore para turistas" (Folklore for tourists), *Notícia*, August 27, 1968, 8–11.

22. According to Domingos Coelho, "o maximbombo do munhungo" referred to the buses that had been retired from service in the central city to ferry Africans in the musseques. *Munhungo* means "prostitute," "and this was also a way to say that this bus was for the lowest level people, and (black) prostitutes were evidently a good example to portray that sector of the population." E-mail to author, April 6, 2003.
23. Albina Assis, interview by author, January 17, 2002.
24. Ana de Sousa Santos, "Aspectos de alguns costumes da população Luandense," *Boletim do Instituto de Investigação Científica de Angola* 7, no. 2 (1970): 55-71.
25. Ramiro Ladeiro Monteiro, *A família nos musseques de Luanda: Subsídios para o seu estudo* (Luanda: Fundação de Acção Social no Trabalho, 1973), 317.
26. *Ibid.*, 316-18. For a photo see the article "Tentação do subúrbio," *Semana ilustrada* 85 (February 8, 1969): 8-9.
27. Jacques Arlindo dos Santos, *Abc do Bê O* (Luanda: Chá de Caxinde, 1998), 211.
28. *Ibid.*, 253-55.
29. Dionísio Rocha, interview by author, May 15, 1998.
30. José Redinha, "Angola terra de folclore," *Boletim cultural (repartição estatística, cultura, propaganda e turismo)*, July-September 1967, 57.
31. José da Sousa Bettencourt, "Subsídio para o estudo sociológico da população de Luanda," *Boletim do Instituto de Investigação Científica de Angola* 2, no. 1 (1965): 127; and Monteiro, *A família nos musseques de Luanda*, 363.
32. Carlos Lamartine, interview by author, September 4, 2001.
33. José Luandino Vieira, *Luuanda: Short Stories of Angola*, trans. Tamara Bender (London: Heinemann, 1980).
34. Assis, interview.
35. The February 4 attack on the Luanda prisons was timed to coincide with the presence of the international press in Luanda. The reporters were awaiting the arrival of the luxury liner *Santa Maria*, which had been hijacked by the Portuguese Henrique Galvão and was supposed to dock in Luanda. Galvão was a former government official who joined the Portuguese opposition to the fascist regime of António Salazar. According to John Marcum, Galvão did not support Angolan independence but wanted a different relationship between metropole and colony than that which prevailed under Salazar. The ship never arrived. The March 15 uprising coincided with a U.N. Security Council session on the question of the Portuguese colonies. See John Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1969), vol. 1, 126-27; and Wheeler and Pélissier, *Angola*, 176.
36. Olga Baltazar, November 22, 2001; Luís Martins ("Xabanu"), November 21, 2001; and Abelino "Manuel" Faria, March 19, 2002; interviews by author.
37. Bettencourt, "Subsídio para o estudo sociológico," 95; and Fernando Mourão, "Configurações dos núcleos humanos de Luanda, do século XVI ao século XX," in *Actas do Seminário: Encontro de Povos e Culturas em Angola* (Lisbon: Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 1997), 206.
38. The clubs were not, however, totally anonymous spaces. Each club had its regulars and bouncers generally knew who had a reputation as a troublemaker or prostitute. Bouncers policed behavior, real and imputed, as much as dress.
39. Benedict Anderson argues that this sort of anonymity is what makes nations "imagined" communities, because we cannot possibly know everyone, yet "in

- the minds of each lives the image of their communion." Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991), 6.
40. Alberto Jaime, interview by author, December 12, 2001.
 41. Chico Coio, interview by author, February 15, 2002; Faria, interview.
 42. Favorite clothing stores included Dona Amália in Rangel and Gajageira in Marçal. A 1969 article in the popular urban magazine *Notícia* claimed that shopping there was "in style" among Europeans in Luanda. It was the people of the musseques who had given the store its name. "Babel do Trapo," *Notícia*, October 25, 1969, 34–41.
 43. It is perhaps no coincidence that in the Angolan writer Luandino Vieira's work *A vida verdadeira de Domingos Xavier* (The true life of Domingos Xavier), the most politicized character we encounter is the tailor, who is involved in the nationalist struggle and is constantly educating his clients and others in the neighborhood about relations of power and exploitation.
 44. Coio, interview.
 45. Lamartine, interview.
 46. Laban, *Mário Pinto de Andrade*; Lamartine, interview; "Xabanu," interview; Matumona Sebastião, interview by author, February 27, 2002.
 47. Notable exceptions included Fernando Sofia Rosa, who wore a pano around his waist and went shoeless for his performances, as well as the band Ngola Ritmos, who sometimes wore panos and *missangas* (beads) around their necks in performances.
 48. "Xabanu," interview.
 49. I listened to, and examined the covers of, hundreds of albums at the music archives of the Rádio Nacional de Angola (the national broadcasting company) and electronically scanned twenty-three album covers from the period.
 50. "Xabanu," interview.
 51. The musician Teta Lando, who has his own production company and has pioneered in reissuing music from this period which had become unavailable, suggested that Urbano de Castro (along with other popular musicians like David Zé and Artur Nunes) was killed in the repression which followed the attempted coup in May 1977 not so much because he was involved with the coup plotters (though he may have been) but because he was the voice of the people and more well known and loved among musseques residents than the political leaders of newly independent Angola. Alberto Teta Lando, interview by author, May 6, 1998.
 52. Lamartine, interview.
 53. Jomo Fortunato, "A música tradicional na consolidação do semba," *Jornal de Angola*, February 14, 1999, Vida e Cultura section, 1–2.
 54. In *The Nation and Its Fragments* Chatterjee discusses the ways in which the rights and roles of women, or the "woman question," are subordinated to the question of political independence in Indian nationalist ideology. See in particular chapters 6 and 7. See also Nira Yuval-Davis, "Gender and Nation," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 16, no. 4 (1993): 621–32, on women as symbols of culture in nationalist ideology.
 55. Female musicians tangled with the assumption that they were morally besmirched and male musicians with the stereotype of the irresponsible bohemian. And the former proved more entrenched than the latter.
 56. Pinto de Andrade mentions that his sister dressed up like Carmen Miranda for